Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with
Lori Treschuk

Lori Treschuk
Photo courtesy of the Treschuk family

Lori Treschuk, also known as Lorayne Miyabara and Lori Hayashi, was one of three arrested in Kalama Valley July 2, 1970, protesting the eviction of tenants. The incident was the first of three arrests to take place in the valley within a year. She was involved in anti-Vietnam War protests as a student. Treschuk later worked for UPW, organizing nurses into a bargaining unit at Queens Medical Center. Treschuk was interviewed at a friend's home in Honolulu by Gary T. Kubota on October 1, 2016.

GK: When and where were you born?

LT: In 1947 in Honolulu.

GK: Where were your parents living at the time and what were they doing?

LT: We lived in Pauoa Valley. My mom was a registered nurse at Kuakini Hospital. She was actually going through nursing school at Kuakini when the Pearl Harbor attack occurred in 1941. She said out of the top window she could see the attack and hear the bombs.

GK: What was your dad doing?

LT: When I was born, my dad Sunao was the executive director of the Young Buddhist Association (YBA) on Oahu.

GK: What school did you go to?

LT: I went to Pauoa Elementary. Then, when we moved to Moanalua when I was 12, I went to Kalakaua Intermediate, then to Farrington High School and graduated in 1965.

GK: Did you go college?

LT: I went to the University of Hawaii in 1965.

GK: Did you know what you wanted as a career?

LT: At that point, I already knew that I wanted to be in the healthcare field and primarily a nurse, because my mom was a nurse. I was looking at medicine and nursing. I was counseled when I was at Farrington High School. My counselor was very chauvinistic. He said, "You don't want to be a doctor. You know, you're not going to have time with your family . . . yada, yada, yada."

At the time, I thought, "Oh well, okay." I went to the University of Hawaii at Manoa in pre-nursing. But I really, really wanted to go to the U.S. mainland, but my parents resisted saying, " You're a girl. You're gonna stay here," and so forth.

GK: What did you do besides your studies at the university?

LT: While I was in college, I was doing library work part time at Farrington High School.

GK: How'd that go?

LT: I decided that I would apply to schools anyway on the mainland. I really wanted to go to the University of California at San Francisco. I applied and got in. Two years had passed and at that point, my parents were really good about supporting me. So I went there. That was in '67.

GK: How'd that go?

LT: I really loved it there. It was a great school. It was right in the middle of what was Haight-Ashbury. There was beginning to be more and more political action. But I was able to get through nursing school. I worked as a volunteer in the Filmore District with African American and Hispanic kids in Head Start programs.

GK: Why were you doing that?

LT: I wanted to do something community oriented, although I was very, very much focused on my schoolwork. I really learned a lot about what people's lives were about. It was a Head Start program with free daycare and childcare. A lot of the parents had two, three jobs. Some of the kids and their parents were facing really hard times. . . The kids were coming from a lot of working-class homes. The Black Panther Party had been formed in Oakland. They had a free breakfast program. I thought that was really good. As much as there was all this negative stuff coming out about the Panthers, I thought, "Hey, you know they got good hearts. . . They really want just to make it better for the African American people there."

My girlfriend and I went with her boyfriend, who had a car, and we would just go over to Berkeley, or whatever. And there was just a lot more political ferment, and it was exciting but scary. But I thought, people are fighting against injustice, and that's right.

I completed my one year at UCSF, came back in the summer of '68. My girlfriend had read this article about draft resistance, burning draft cards and so forth and there was a mention of one of the participants, Wayne Hayashi. I had met him before at the university, and I met him again and I fell madly in love. So rather than go back to UCSF, I stayed here, much to the disappointment of my parents. Then I got more and more politicized. We got married in September 1968.

GK: How did you become involved in the protest in Kalama Valley?

LT: I was involved only on the periphery. I knew Kalani Ohelo through Ko (Wayne Hayashi) and John and Lucy Witeck through Youth Action. . . It was July 1970 when I was seven months pregnant with Sasha. And John got a call in the morning, and I had just come back from taking a ceramics course at Farrington High. John got a call saying that it looked like there were bulldozers there, and it looked like they were going to start bulldozing. So he asked me, "Do you want to go?"

GK: (Laughter).

LT: I said, "Oh, okay." I knew that people were being evicted, and I thought that was wrong. And Lucy was days out of the hospital after having Matthew, and we were all living together. There were just the three of us—John, Linton Park, and I. That was in early July 1970. When we got there, we saw a bulldozer starting to go towards a house, and we went to that house. It was a Quonset hut. And I remember going up onto the porch. I sat in a chair, with John and Linton standing up beside me. I remember this big Hawaiian guy was sitting in the bulldozer—he was working it. And I thought, holy-----, because he started the bulldozer . . . There was nobody in the house. There were still things in it. People were clearly still living in that house.

GK: Was there still a refrigerator and food?

LT: Yeah. So, anyway, we're sitting there, and the bulldozer started up, and I recall the bulldozer operator Tiny started going, and this Bishop Estate official Ed Michaels just egging him on. . . Tiny was very reluctant, very slow, slow, slow, and then he stopped. He basically got off of the bulldozer, threw down the keys and said, "If you want this bulldozer to move and bulldoze that house down, you do it." And he walked off. Thank goodness, because I wasn't sure what we were gonna do. . .

GK: So what happened after that?

LT: Then the cops got called. We were arrested.

GK: What happened?

LT: So we were put in cars. We were taken off the property, processed and booked at the old police station on Beretania.

GK: What were you booked for?

LT: Trespassing, and we were bailed out.

GK. What went through your mind?

LT: I thought, "Holy cow, what am I getting myself into?" At the same time, I thought maybe, these people should not be evicted at all. I wondered how this development by Bishop Estate was for the Hawaiian people. I remember my dad telling me way back when my grandfather came from Japan, he worked at a dairy farm in Waialae and the whole area had been agricultural before it was developed. It was beautiful.

GK: Okay, so you were pregnant seven months when you got arrested. What happened after that? What was your parents' reaction to this?

LT: They were not happy, of course. My mother said we didn't raise you to be somebody like that. I was always supposed to be a good Japanese girl, right? Study hard, make good grades? You know, with the Japanese, it was like you gotta be more American in America, right? Assimilation was so important. I told my mother these people shouldn't be able to push people out of their homes. It was very, very difficult 'cause they were very upset. I was trying to explain to them that basically the same thing that is happening in Vietnam is happening here in Hawaii. . . The U.S. has invaded another country. This is their land, this is their livelihood, their people and they're doing it, as far as I understood, for strategic geopolitical purposes. And then I said, same thing is happening in Kalama Valley.

GK: How did your dad take it?

LT: There's a lot of paranoia in my family, and I mean for good reason. My mother's father was interned during World War II. He was very nationalistic.

GK: Did he do anything to cast suspicion?

LT: No. . . but he wrote prolifically in Japanese. He had diaries that he would write. Anybody who wrote a lot in Japanese, the government officials considered, could be a spy.

GK: How did anyone know he wrote diaries?

LT: There were people in the Japanese community who said, you know, this guy he writes a lot. I remember my mom saying that once my grandfather was taken away, family members gathered some of his belongings. He had volumes of diaries. They buried it. . . Later, they couldn't find it. I think they probably didn't want to find it either.

GK: What happened to him?

LT: He was sent to the internment camp at Honouliuli in Waipahu, then to an internment

camp in New Mexico and later to Jerome, Arkansas. I don't know why.

GK: How long did he spend interned?

LT: I don't know, but I remembered my uncle, my mother's youngest brother, joined the U.S. Army, and he wanted to visit my grandfather when he was in the Army. So, of course, he had to go to the concentration camp, and here he was in his military garb—there was a lot of that happening, right? Anyway, my grandfather came back and nobody said anything.

GK: Nobody talked about it?

LT: No, no, no.

GK: Why do you think they didn't talk about it? Was it a shame? Was it a fear?

LT: I think they're both of those things—paranoia and a lot of shame.

GK: What about your father?

LT: These military guys recruited him after he graduated from college in Indiana. They were looking for people who were bilingual. What happened is that they assigned him to British Intelligence in the India-Burma Theater.

GK: How did that turn out?

LT: As far as military veterans benefits, he never got any. The U.S. said, "He's not ours." The British said, "Yeah, but he's a U.S. citizen"—and so he really never got any benefits.

GK: What did your father do after World War II?

LT: He went to graduate school and earned a master's degree in business and worked at Liberty Bank. He became a senior vice president when he was in his sixties.

GK: So, he had a high profile?

LT: He helped to found the World Fellowship of Buddhists. People in the Japanese community knew him.

GK: Were you ever able to reach some kind of resolution with your parents?

LT: They were not as angry about the Kalama Valley arrest as with my anti-Vietnam War activity. I think they were really upset about anti-war activities because we, as part of the Resistance movement, were just always in the newspaper. When I had Sasha in September of 1970, the prosecutor's office kind of dismissed me from the trespass case, because I was

in the hospital. My parents took a trip to Bangkok, Thailand and told Ko and I that we could stay at their house in Moanalua.